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C O N F I D E N T I A L VIENNA 002270

SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA AND EUR/AGS - VIKMANIS-KELLER

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [IR](#) [AU](#)

SUBJECT: AUSTRIA-IRAN: NO FORMAL INVESTIGATION YET INTO  
IRANIAN PRESIDENT'S INVOLVEMENT IN 1989 MURDERS

REF: VIENNA 2254

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Carol van Voorst. Reasons: 1.4  
(b) and (d).

1. (C) Spokespersons for the Vienna State Prosecutor's Office and for the Austrian Justice Ministry have told us that no/no investigation is yet open into the alleged involvement of Iranian president-elect Mahmoud Ahmedinejad in the 1989 murders of three Kurdish leaders in Vienna. This contradicts reports in the Reuters wire service and in Vienna's "Der Standard" newspaper, which say Austrian spokespersons have "confirmed" that an investigation is underway. State Prosecutor's Office spokesperson Ernst Kloiber and Justice Ministry spokesperson Poechinger (strictly protect both) have told us that the press "misquoted" them on this point.

2. (C) Kloiber and Poechinger told us that what happened was a follow up to the information which Greens parliamentarian Peter Pilz had provided, citing a man he called "Witness D." The spokespersons told us separately that authorities have asked the Austrian Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution and Against Terrorism (BVT) to "inquire whether and under which circumstances" "Witness D" would come from France to Vienna to provide further information. According to Kloiber, the matter is complicated because "Witness D" does not want to speak to French authorities. He is apparently living in France illegally, and he also fears that France would deport him back to Iran in the spirit of "good French-Iranian relations."

3. (C) Kloiber also told us that the 1989 murder case is not closed. Therefore, there would be no need to "re-open" the case if authorities believed there were sufficient reason to pursue further leads. (Note: According to press reports, in 1989, the murder suspects took refuge in the Iranian Embassy in Vienna. After a long standoff, Austrian police withdrew from the vicinity of the Embassy, and the suspects left Austria. Iran reportedly achieved this with implicit threats of retaliation, saying it was afraid the Iranian public would take reprisals against Austrian citizens in Iran if the Iranian "diplomats" were not permitted to return to Iran. End note.)

4. (C) Kloiber expressed personal skepticism about the usefulness of the evidence Pilz has presented. Rather than being an eyewitness himself, "Witness D" is actually an intermediate source, who received the information himself from an Iranian general -- who is now dead.

5. (C) Austrians have expressed some bemusement at the Iranian reaction to reports that the prosecutors have opened an investigation. The Austrian and Iranian press is reporting that the Iranian Foreign Ministry has summoned Austrian Ambassador Michael Stigelbauer to explain Austria's handling of the situation. According to Reuters, the Iranian Foreign Ministry said the accusation against Ahmedinejad came from "Zionist circles," and said, "it would be better if Austrian authorities thought about the two countries' good relations instead of becoming a tool in the hands of those who want to create tension." Susanne Gaugl, Director of the Office of President Heinz Fischer, noted that the group with whom Austria had made such efforts were now out of office, and the new team felt no compunctions about flaunting Austria's "constructive engagement."  
Brown